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RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA PRIORITY 0940
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SUBJECT: GUINEA REQUESTS TEAR GAS FROM GABON

Classified By: Ambassador Barrie Walkley for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Gabon's Foreign Minister, Jean Ping, told Ambassador Walkley that late on the evening of January 23 Guinea's ambassador to Gabon (Ibrahima Sory Soumah) approached Ping with the request that Gabon urgently supply Guinea with tear gas. Soumah said that Guinea's military and security forces have no tear gas or rubber bullets and have thus had to resort to live fire in confronting disorder and protesters. Soumah explained that the request for tear gas was "humanitarian, a way of saving lives, preventing more deaths."

¶2. (C) Ping said that President Bongo (who returns from Paris today) will make the ultimate decision on the tear gas request. Ping, however, appears opposed -- worried that any provision of tear gas will be interpreted as an attempt to maintain Lansana Conte in power. Ping said he told Soumah that Gabon "will study the matter."

¶3. (C) Ping also said that he received a call from Alpha Conde July 23. Conde has many contacts in Libreville, including a number of cabinet ministers who were Conde's students in Paris. Conde, who knows Omar Bongo, wants Bongo to call Conde and ask Conde to step down.QWALKLEY